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ABSTRACT

This guide prepares students for a visit to the Hemphill Folk Art Collection at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The guide includes a map showing the six states from where the art works originated; questions and answers about the art; and activities for students. As students read the guide and look at the photographs of the art works, they are asked to think about why every person has the "urge to create." The following art works are shown and discussed: "Gorilla" (1976) by Felipe Benito Archuleta, a carved and painted cottonwood figure; "Ohio State University Stadium" (1984) by William Hawkins, enamel housepaint on paneling with a painted wood frame; "Bottlecap Lion" (after 1966) by an unidentified artist, a figure of carved and painted wood, bottlecaps, flashcubes, fiberboard, and plastic; "Fan Quilt, Mount Carmel" (January 16, 1893) by residents of Bourbon County, Kentucky, embroidered, appliqued, and pieced cotton, wool, and silk with paint and chromolithographic decals; "Mickey Mouse Kachina" (after 1930) by an unidentified Hopi artist, a figure of carved and painted cottonwood, feathers, and string; and "Wedding Cake Basket" (1986) by Mary Adams, sweet grass and ash splint basketry. (BT)

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A Student Guide to the Hemphill Folk Art Collection.

Bredin, Elizabeth Shear

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How Can I Get An Idea Like That?

A Student Guide to the Hemphill Folk Art Collection

National Museum of American Art
Smithsonian Institution

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Mary Adams
Wedding Cake Basket
William Hawkins
Ohio State University Stadium
Washington
Oregon
Montana
Idaho
Wyoming
Nevada
Utah
Colorado
California
Arizona
New Mexico
North Dakota
South Dakota
Nebraska
Kansas
Oklahoma
Texas
Minnesota
Iowa
Missouri
Arkansas
Louisiana
Wisconsin
Illinois
Michigan
Indiana
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Alabama
Georgia
Florida
South Carolina
North Carolina
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West Virginia
Pennsylvania
New York
Maryland
Delaware
New Jersey
Connecticut
Rhode Island
Massachusetts
New Hampshire
Vermont
Maine
Hopi Indian Tribe
Mickey Mouse Kachina
Felipe Archuleta
Gorilla
Residents of Bourbon
County, Kentucky
Fan Quilt

Dear Student:

This guide was written to prepare you to visit a collection of folk art at the National Museum of American Art. The guide includes a map showing the states where six of the works of art were made, questions and answers about the art, and activities for you to do in class or at home with your friends and family. As you read the guide and look at the photographs of the art, think about why every person has the urge to create. Whether you paint, draw, sculpt, cook, write, dance, compose music, or build models, you are using your personality and individual background to create something that is one of a kind—as are you.

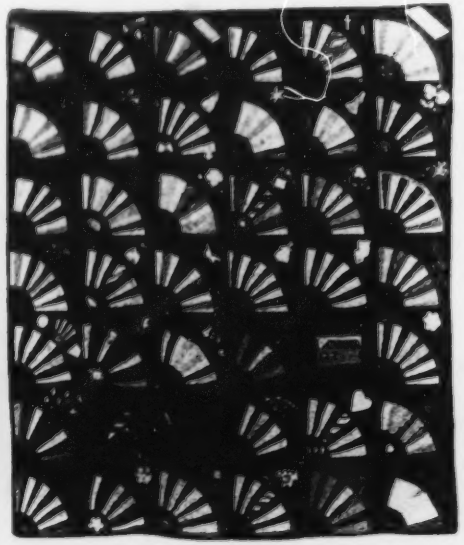
To help you picture the objects in the guide, we have listed their dimensions (height by width by depth) and the materials (called "media") from which they are made.

At the National Museum of American Art you will see many examples of folk art. After reading this guide and doing some of the activities, you might be able to answer the question asked by self-taught painter William Hawkins — "How did *he* get an idea like *that*?"

Felipe Archuleta
Gorilla

Mary Adams
Wedding Cake Basket

Hopi Indian Tribe
Mickey Mouse Kachina



Residents of Bourbon County, Kentucky
Fan Quilt

Gorilla, National Museum of American Art

Felipe Benito Archuleta, born 1910

Gorilla, 1976

carved and painted cottonwood
with glue and sawdust
40 x 27 1/4 x 42 in.

Before the age of fifty-seven, Felipe Archuleta had worked as a carpenter, a drummer, and a cook, but never as an artist. He was inspired to begin whittling and carving after he asked God to give him a *virtud*—the Spanish word for a blessing of creativity. He explained:

> I ask God for some kind of miracle, some kind of thing to do...some kind of thing that I can make...I started carving after that.

Felipe Archuleta grew up in a small Spanish-speaking village in New Mexico. His art comes from an old Spanish tradition of wood carving. As long ago as the sixteenth century (1500s), techniques of carving religious sculptures in wood were brought tc the American Southwest by the Spanish *conquistadores* (conquerors) and missionaries. Archuleta has created a new tradition by carving animals that combine his Hispanic heritage with his personal urge to create.

Felipe Archuleta makes his sculptures in a shed in his yard. The tools that he uses include chain saws, hatchets, and Swiss army knives. For decoration, he applies painted fur, frayed rope (for a lion's mane), marbles (for eyes), and plastic broom bristles (for porcupine quills). He has carved many animals that live in the deserts and mountains of the Southwest, including burros, porcupines, coyotes, and gorillas. GORILLAS! Are gorillas really found living wild in New Mexico? (This artist based his carving on a photograph of an African silver-backed gorilla in the *National Geographic* magazine.)

Felipe Archuleta and *Gorilla*, Courtesy Davis Mather

QUESTIONS

- Where do gorillas live?
- Look at the gorilla's hands. Are his hands like yours?
- Where is New Mexico located?

ANSWERS

- Gorillas live in the equatorial African countries of Cameroon, Zaire, Ruwanda, and Burundi.
- Yes, his hands are like yours. Gorillas are the largest members of the great ape family. They use their hands to grasp things just like we do. Look at your hand. Notice how your thumb can move *across* your palm, not just up and down. Tuck your thumb in and try to pick something up without using it. It's difficult, isn't it?
- New Mexico, the forty-seventh state, is located next to Texas and borders the Central American country of Mexico. From the early sixteenth century (1500s) until the nineteenth century (1800s), New Mexico was dominated by the Spanish. In 1821 it became part of Mexico. Then in 1848, after the Mexican War, it was made a Territory of the United States and was admitted as a state in 1912.

William Hawkins, 1895-1990

Ohio State University Stadium, 1984

enamel housepaint on paneling
with painted wood frame
46 1/2 x 48 in.

Have you taken a ride in an airplane or watched a football game on television? If not, then you probably have not seen a stadium from this viewpoint. William Hawkins did not fly over the university stadium in Columbus, Ohio. Instead, he based his painting on an aerial photograph similar to the one shown here. He adapted the photograph by using his active imagination and his experiences in Columbus where he lived. Look at the playing field, goal posts, flags, and the buildings in the surrounding neighborhood.

William Hawkins was not a trained artist. He taught himself to draw when he was a boy by copying pictures from calendars and horse sale announcements that his grandfather saved. Most of his paintings are of farm animals, prehistoric monsters, and cityscapes (views of cities).

William Hawkins once made this comment about his talent:

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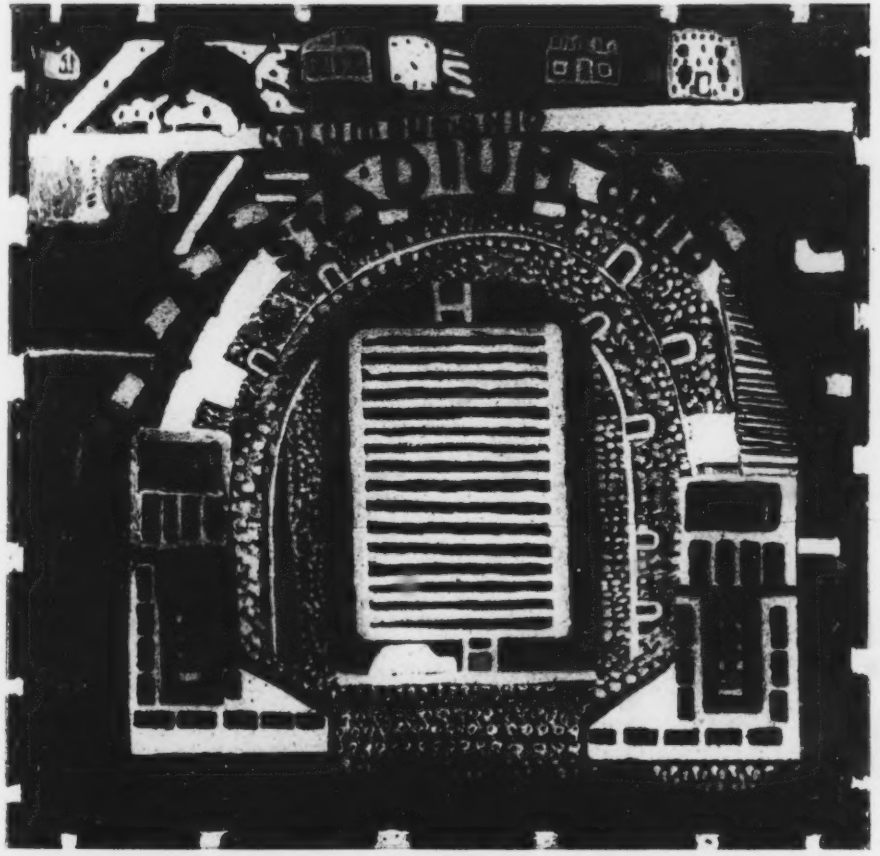
Sometimes I stand and stare at a painting I just did and wonder how I did it. How did *he* get an idea like *that* ?...The old man's a genius, ain't he?



Ohio State University Stadium, National Museum of American Art

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QUESTIONS

- Although the stadium is seen from directly above, the neighboring buildings are seen from the _____ _____ .
- Why did William Hawkins show two different viewpoints, or perspectives, in one painting?
- What do all of the spots of paint in the stadium represent?
- Compare the painting and the photograph. How are they similar or different? (Flip the photograph over in your imagination to see it from the same viewpoint as in the painting.)

Aerial photograph of the Ohio State University Stadium, Courtesy the Ohio State University

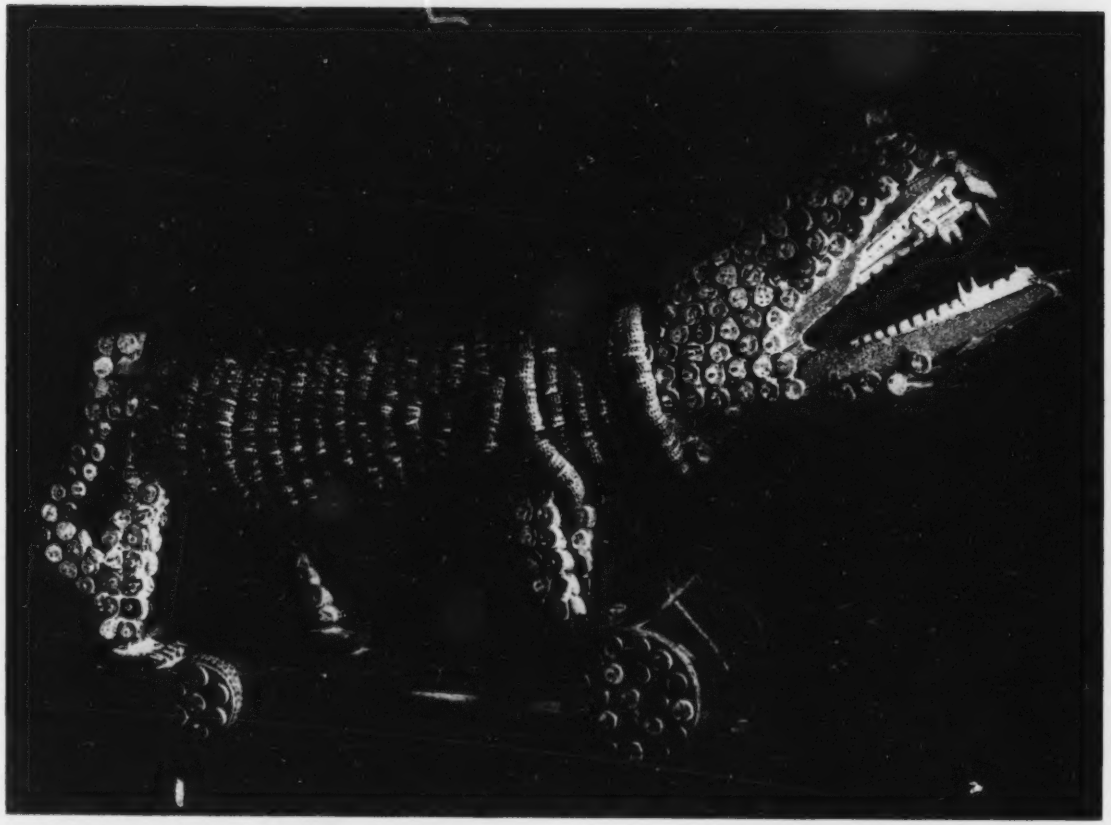
William Hawkins, Courtesy Ricco/Maresca Gallery

ANSWERS

- Front
- It is difficult to identify most buildings from an aerial view. If William Hawkins had shown only the front of the stadium, you would probably see only blank walls. Also, by showing the interior, he suggests the excitement of being in a crowded sports arena.
- The spots probably represent crowds of people going in and out of the stadium. William Hawkins did not have to show the people in detail in order to convey the lively spirit of the stadium.
- There are many similarities and differences. They include no flags flying or goal posts in the photograph; the stadium is empty in the photograph but it is full in the painting; in both, the yardage markings on the playing field are clearly visible.

Unidentified artist
Bottlecap Lion, after 1966

carved and painted wood, bottlecaps, flashcubes, fiberboard, and plastic
29 1/4 x 49 1/2 x 15 in.



Bottlecap Lion, National Museum of American Art

When you think about recycling, you probably think of collecting aluminum cans or newspapers. But recycling also means re-using. The *Bottlecap Lion* shows how imaginative recycling can create works of art. The artist who made *Bottlecap Lion* collected everyday objects—old pieces of wood, plastic, flash cubes, and bottlecaps from Teem, Mountain Dew, 7-UP, Coca-Cola. All of these materials were used to make this sculpture by nailing bottlecaps onto a wooden form. Even more bottlecaps were strung on wire to make a rope that was wrapped around the form to create the lion's body. The artist attached other wires to the lion's mouth and tail. If you could pull on those wires, the animal's mouth would snap open and shut and its tail would flip up and down.

Making art from discarded materials requires a special kind of imagination. An artist has to invent new uses for objects and materials that people have thrown away. Here, the artist chose the bottlecaps especially for their shape, color, and texture—not for what they were, but for what they could become.

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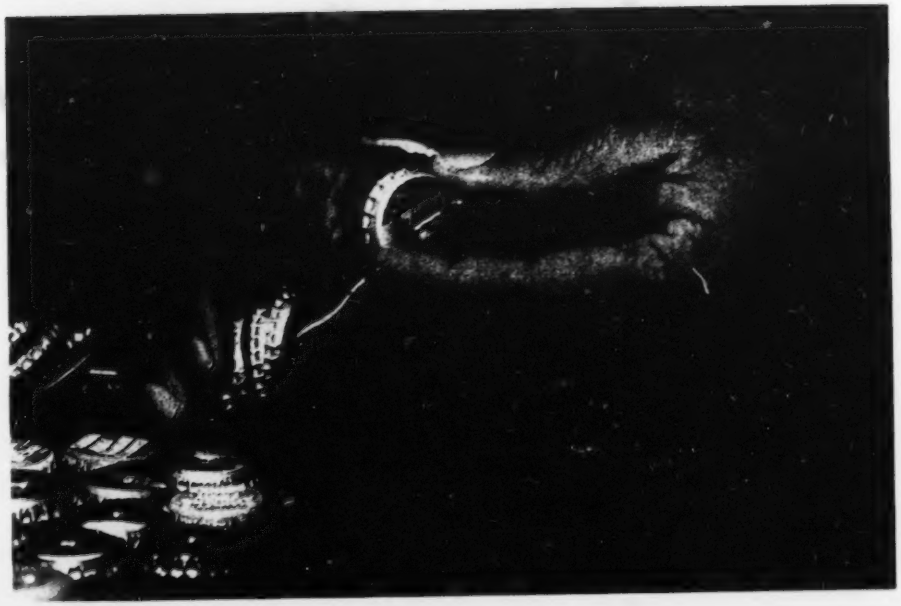
Would you like to know who made this *Bottlecap Lion*? So would we! This artist, however, left no clues, so we cannot tell you whether a man or a woman, young or old, made the sculpture. We do not even know where the artist was born or worked.



Bottlecaps strung on wire, National Museum of American Art

QUESTIONS

- The *Bottlecap Lion* is not signed or dated. We have no clues about the artist. Do you sign all of your art projects? What does a signature or date tell?
- Why is the work of an unidentified artist in a museum?
- Why did the artist use discarded flash cubes for the lion's eyes?

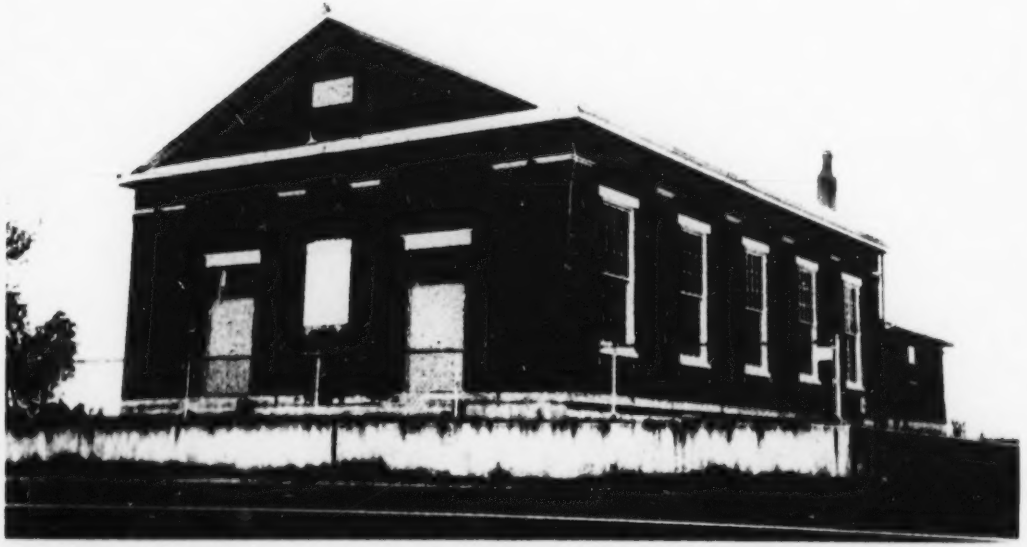
ANSWERS

- A signature and date tells who made the work of art and when. Once you have this basic information, you may be able to discover where and why it was made. If something is unsigned, it may be unidentified forever. While it is not necessary to sign and date every doodle, identifying yourself helps to preserve information for the future. Look at the signature on William Hawkins' painting, *Ohio State University Stadium*. Hawkins was so proud of his talent that he signed his name and date of birth on all of his paintings.
- The *Bottlecap Lion* is in a museum because it combines materials and imagination to create a work of art. This shows that an artist does not have to be famous or even well known to create art.
- Flash cubes produce a quick, bright flash of light, which might remind you of the way an animal's eyes reflect light at night. Also, a flash cube's structure—a circle inside a square—could have reminded the artist of the structure of an eye.

Residents of Bourbon County, Kentucky
Fan Quilt, Mount Carmel,
January 16, 1893

embroidered, appliquéd, and pieced cotton, wool, and silk, with paint and chromolithographic decals
85 x 72 1/4 in.

This *Fan Quilt* was probably made by the women members of the Mount Carmel Christian Church in 1893. We know this since the quilters embroidered the date below the square depicting their church. The quilt is made of forty-two separate squares of many fabrics—wool, cotton, silk, and velvet. The fabrics have been pieced together and decorated with embroidered and appliquéd (patched) names, plants, stars, animals, and figures arranged to make pictures. The little building is the Mount Carmel Christian Church, which is still standing in Bourbon County, Kentucky. The church has two front doors. This is because long ago men and women entered through separate doors and sat on opposite sides of the church.



Mount Carmel Christian Church, Bourbon County, Kentucky, Courtesy Rev. Franklin McGuire

Traditionally, quilts were often made by groups of women for use in their homes. The women would get together at quilting parties, called "quilting bees," to sew, talk, and tell stories.

This *Fan Quilt* has 110 names and initials embroidered across its surface. There are two theories about why this quilt was created. It may have been made to commemorate an important event or person in the community. Or it may have been made to

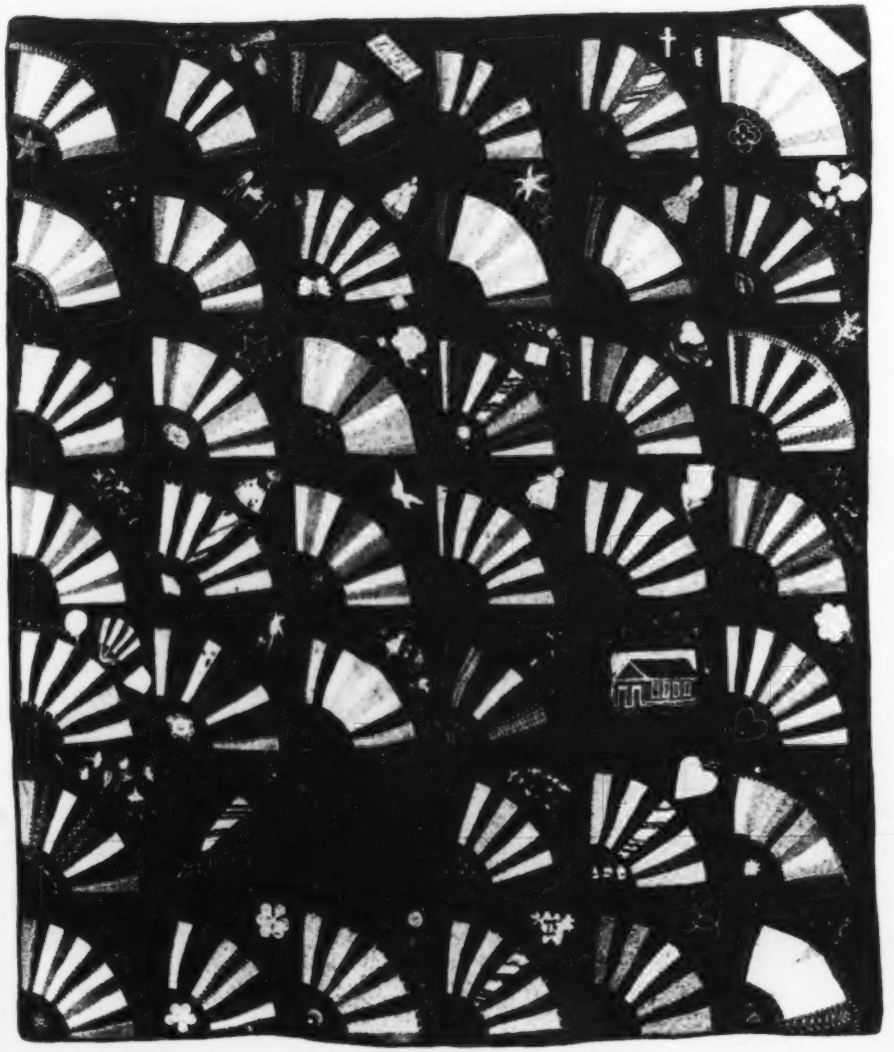
raise funds for a charity or an issue important to the community. Often, people in a community paid a small sum of money to have their names embroidered on a quilt. Later, the quilt was sold in a raffle. Then all of the money was given to a good cause, such as an orphan's home or missionary family. Although we don't know which theory is correct, we can tell that this *Fan Quilt* is an expression of communal good will. Many people cooperated to make it.

QUESTIONS

- How is a quilt different from a blanket?
- Why is this style of quilt called a "fan quilt"?
- If you were making a quilt, what pictures or symbols would you include to represent yourself or your family? (Hint: hobbies, sports, favorite flowers.)

ANSWERS

- A quilt is a kind of bedspread made from two layers of fabric with a layer of padding (called batting) sewn between. The top layer is often made of patchwork. Often, quilts are made by hand.
- This style of quilt, popular in the nineteenth century (1800s), is decorated with fan-shaped patterns.
- You might add a clue about yourself such as a soccer ball, a daisy, or your initials. These symbols are a kind of signature.



Fan Quilt, Mount Carmel, National Museum of American Art

Unidentified artist
Mickey Mouse Kachina, after 1930

carved and painted cottonwood, feathers, and string
11 3/4 x 5 3/8 x 4 3/4 in.

Mickey Mouse Kachina, National Museum of American Art

The Native American tribe called the Hopi believe that supernatural spirits lived on the earth long ago. They call these spirits kachinas. The kachinas are important to the Hopi religion and culture because they take care of the villages by bringing rain and fertility. According to the Hopi religion, when the kachinas left the earth, they taught the Hopi men to impersonate them in religious ceremonies. For hundreds of years, the men have danced in painted masks and costumes, decorated with horns and feathers. Shaking loud rattles, they dance in long lines. During the cold months from December through March, the kachina dancers have their ceremonies in private, underground rooms called *kivas*. When the weather is warm, they perform in the plazas in the center of the villages. There are almost 250 kachina spirits. Almost every one is represented by the dancers.

The Hopi also make kachina dolls that are small replicas of the dancers. They are hand carved from the root of the cottonwood tree and given to Hopi children. By playing with the dolls, the children learn the legends about the kachina spirits.

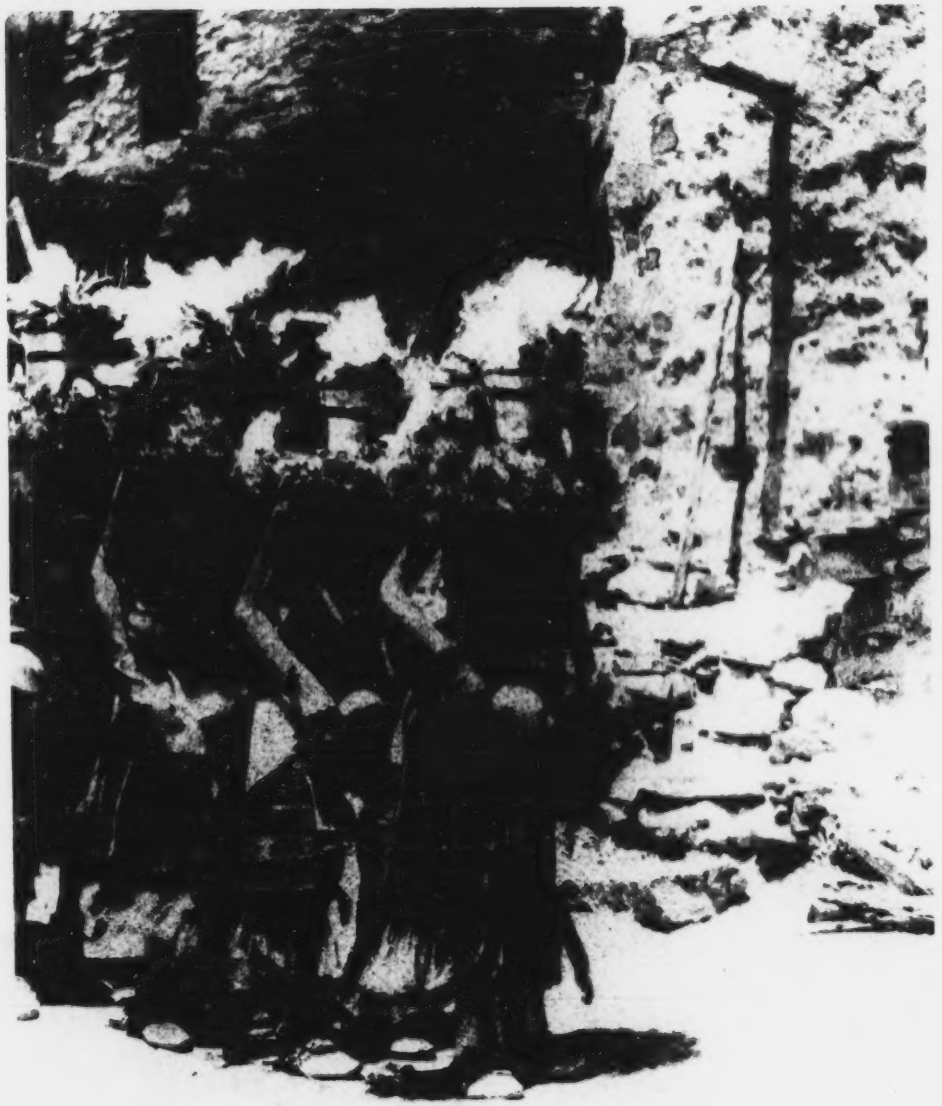
This *Mickey Mouse Kachina* is based on Walt Disney's cartoon character, Mickey Mouse, and on the kachina dancers called *Koyemsi*, which means "mudhead" in English. The *Koyemsi* are clowns who jump and dance and play tricks when the other kachina dancers are taking a break.

QUESTIONS

- What is the *Mickey Mouse Kachina* carrying?
- How does this kachina doll differ from the Mickey Mouse you've seen in the cartoons?
- Why do people perform ceremonial dances? What kind of ceremonial dances do you have in your family or community?

ANSWERS

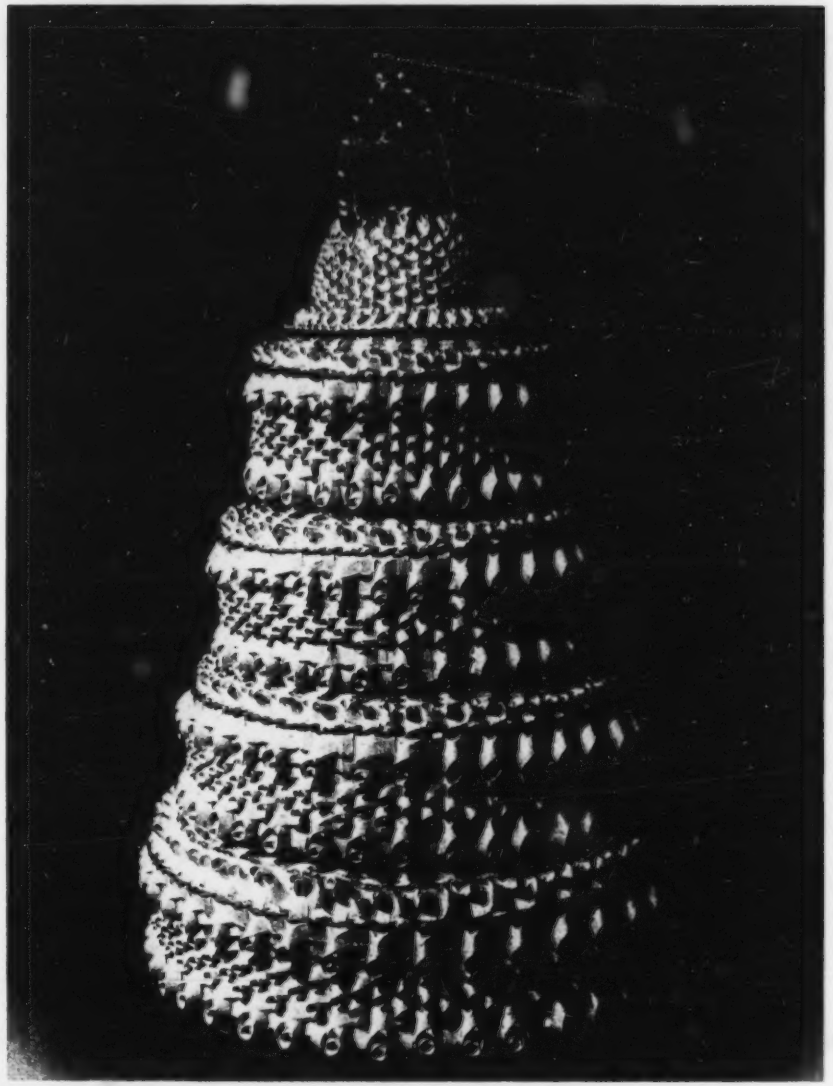
- He has a rattle and a feather. The *Koyemsi* traditionally carry these objects when they dance.
- The *Mickey Mouse Kachina* has a feathered knob on top of his head and wears a Hopi Indian costume. The cartoon character Mickey Mouse has a round, smooth head and wears suspenders with big buttons.
- A dance may commemorate an important event, such as your graduation from school, or a bride's dance with her new husband. You may have seen, or participated in, dances like the Irish jig, a springtime Maypole dance, the Jewish hora, and square dancing.



Hopi dance, Courtesy National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Mary Adams, born 1920s
Wedding Cake Basket, 1986

sweet grass and ash splint basketry
25 1/2 x 15 3/4 in. (diam.)



Wedding Cake Basket, National Museum of American Art

Mary Adams is a member of the Native American tribe called Mohawks. She lives on the Saint Regis Reserve on the border between New York state and the Canadian province of Quebec. Find this on the map.

Her *Wedding Cake Basket* combines the traditional craft of basketry with a popular form—the wedding cake. This basket's design is unique since Mary Adams is the only person who makes wedding cake baskets. She uses natural materials like sweet grass (the darker parts) and ash splints (the lighter parts). The splints are shavings from the ash tree. These materials are native to the Canadian border region where she lives. The *Wedding Cake Basket* is both useful and pretty. Each layer of the basket lifts off and can be used as an individual basket for storage.

Mary Adams teaches basketry at a local museum twice a week. She often works with her sister, Margaret, and her daughter, Gertrude. By teaching the art of basketry, Mary Adams is passing her traditional artistry on to younger generations of Mohawk people. To most people, tradition is very important. Tradition provides balance between the busy and changing modern world and the past. On the Saint Regis Reserve, Native American children learn traditional art forms by watching, gathering materials, and finally, by doing.

QUESTIONS

- Why is this called a "wedding cake basket"?
- This basket is both beautiful and useful. Each layer is really a hollow storage space. Look around your classroom or home. Do you see something that is useful and attractive?
- Traditions are passed down from one generation to another. What traditions have you learned from your community or family?

Mary Adams weaving, Courtesy Office of Printing and Photographic Services, Smithsonian Institution

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ANSWERS

- It is made of round layers, which get smaller from bottom to top, like a wedding cake. The "curlicues" (fancy curls) around the edges look like swirls of cake icing. There are even little woven wedding bells at the very top of the basket. And, Mary Adams used a light-colored wood so that her basket would look like the white color of a traditional wedding cake. Have you been to a wedding? Does this basket look like a wedding cake you have seen?
- Many things combine function and beauty. It is a human urge to be creative and to make our world as pleasant as we can. Think about why you chose the object that you did. What about it is both useful and attractive?
- Even without knowing it, you have inherited many traditions from your family. They may include eating turkey on Thanksgiving, lighting the candles of the Menorah, decorating eggs for Easter, wearing green on St. Patrick's Day, and making Valentines.

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Activities

You are the collector

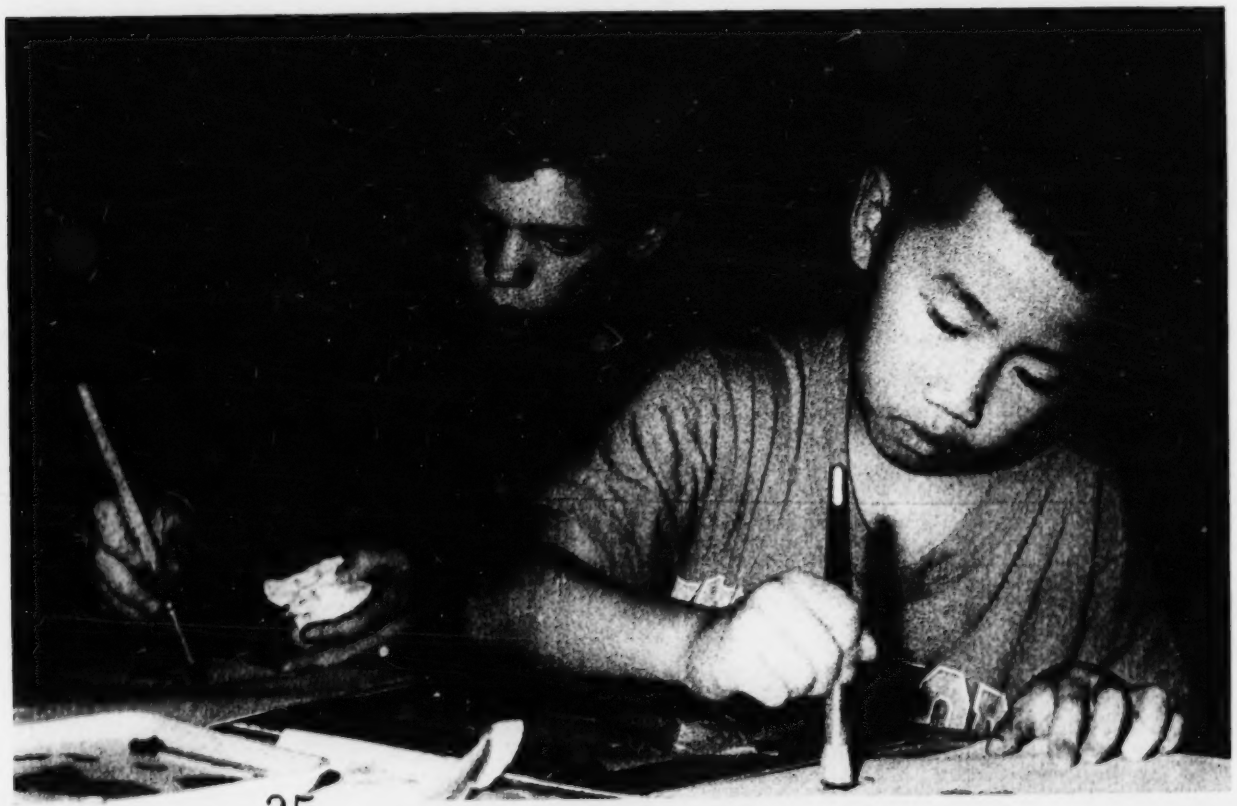
Flip through this book, looking at the photographs. Are these the sorts of objects you expect to see in a museum? Why or why not? Why might Mr. Hemphill, the collector, have chosen these objects? What does this collection tell you about Mr. Hemphill's personality, taste, and interests? For that matter, why do people collect? Do you collect anything? T-shirts? Stuffed animals? Stamps? Stickers? Sea shells? Letters? Mr. Hemphill started collecting baseball cards, coins, dolls, duck decoys, canes, and glass bottles when he was a boy.

Assemble a collection of objects that are related in some way—by material, use, origin, theme, or subject. If you already have a collection, use it. Think like a museum curator (someone who organizes exhibitions) as you arrange the collection in an exhibition at home, in your classroom, or in your imagination. Remember that every exhibition has a message to communicate, even if it is just, "Look at these beautiful objects and enjoy them." An exhibition must be organized so that visitors can see everything and understand the labels. So, you must consider lighting, placement, the height of the display, and what you want your visitors to learn from the exhibition.

Make a title sign and labels for your exhibition. On the labels include the title or name of the object, the date it was made (if you know), the date it was collected, and materials from which it is made. You may add more information if you have the time or think it is important. Place the labels next to the objects, not right on them. When the exhibition is complete, give your classmates or family a "tour." Encourage them to ask questions. Be sure to ask what they learned from the exhibition, and what they might do differently.

You are the artist

Can you create a sculpture using recycled materials? Yes, you sure can! Search around your house, collecting throwaways. Choose them for their shape, color, texture, and size. Buttons, beads, old costume jewelry, egg cartons, yarn and string, wheels from old toys—anything goes when you are the artist. (Be sure to ask for permission to use any items that do not belong to you.) Arrange these "found objects" to create a sculpture. Before gluing the pieces together, tape or tack them in place. Remember—sculptures are three-dimensional, so look at yours from all sides. Do the colors and shapes look right together? Do you like the way the sculpture reflects light? Is the sculpture balanced so that it will not fall over? You can move the pieces around before making your final choice. When you have finished experimenting, glue it all together. You may also use paint or Magic Marker. You could even put your sculpture on a base and make a label for it. Congratulations! You are an artist.



Children at a recent workshop held at the National Museum of American Art

You are the historian

Most of the works of art in this guide are also records of history. The *Fan Quilt* records the names of the residents of Bourbon County, Kentucky, and the *Wedding Cake Basket* records an art tradition. If works of art are part of history, then what about your family's traditions, or your grandmother's favorite story, or your next-door neighbor's tastiest recipe? Everyday life is part of history just as are presidents, wars, and events documented by books, newspapers, and television.

In this activity, you will use a research tool called the "oral history interview." Oral history preserves stories, traditions, and descriptions of past ways of life that have not been written down.

You are the historian, so you are also the interviewer. Interview a family member or friend. The person you interview is called the subject. Professional historians call the subject the informant. Take careful notes or, better yet, tape record the interview. Start your interview by asking the subject's full name, nickname, and date and place of birth. It is best to have a goal or theme for your oral history interview. For example, ask what life was like when your subject was ten years old. What did he or she do in school? What did he or she do after school? How did the family celebrate holidays? Ask open-ended questions that will yield more than just a "yes" or a "no" answer. Let the subject do most of the talking. An interview is not like a conversation. Always end the interview when your subject is getting tired or fidgety and thank him (or her) politely.

When you have finished, present your research to your class or family through an oral report, a short paper or a skit, or by creating an art project. When you are the historian, you learn to appreciate other people and different ways of life. Keep your eyes, ears, and mind open as you learn that art and history are everywhere—in museums and in your world, too.

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This book lists things to save—from bottlecaps and ice cream sticks to baby food jars and clothespins—in order to create imaginative home projects.

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